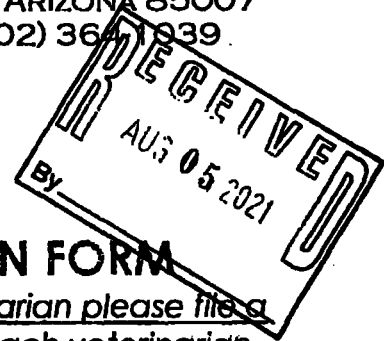


ARIZONA STATE VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINING BOARD  
1740 W. ADAMS ST., SUITE 4600, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007  
PHONE (602) 364-1PET (1738) FAX (602) 364-1939  
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**COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION FORM**

If there is an issue with more than one veterinarian please file a separate Complaint Investigation Form for each veterinarian

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

Date Received: Aug 5, 2021

Case Number: 22-08

**A. THIS COMPLAINT IS FILED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING:**

Name of Veterinarian/CVT: Dr. Dorto and Dr. Lanman

Premise Name: PetsVet

Premise Address: 15808 N. El Mirage Rd.

City: Surprise State: AZ Zip Code: 85378

Telephone: (623) 910-3242

**B. INFORMATION REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL FILING COMPLAINT\*:**

Name: Hunter McGee

Address: [REDACTED]

City: [REDACTED] State: [REDACTED] Zip Code: [REDACTED]

Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\*STATE LAW REQUIRES WE HAVE TO DISCLOSE YOUR NAME UNLESS WE CAN SHOW THAT DISCLOSURE WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL HARM TO YOU, SOMEONE ELSE OR THE PUBLIC PER A.R.S. § 41-1010. IF YOU HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SUBSTANTIAL HARM WILL RESULT IN DISCLOSURE OF YOUR NAME PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES OF RESTRAINING ORDERS OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION.

**C. PATIENT INFORMATION (1):**

Name: Zeus McGee

Breed/Species: Ferret

Age: 13 weeks Sex: M Color: White

**PATIENT INFORMATION (2):**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Breed/Species: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Color: \_\_\_\_\_

**D. VETERINARIANS WHO HAVE PROVIDED CARE TO THIS PET FOR THIS ISSUE:**

*Please provide the name, address and phone number for each veterinarian.*

Zeus was taken in on 7/23/21 because something appeared to be wrong with his hind right leg. Dr. Dorto treated Zeus and asked if I wanted an xray on the leg. I agreed to the xray.

On 7/27/21 I had to take Zeus back to find out if surgery was needed. On this occasion he saw Dr. Lanmari.

**E. WITNESS INFORMATION:**

*Please provide the name, address and phone number of each witness that has direct knowledge regarding this case.*

Yvette Harrington

[REDACTED]

**Attestation of Person Requesting Investigation**

By signing this form, I declare that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Further, I authorize the release of any and all medical records or information necessary to complete the investigation of this case.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 8-4-21

**F. ALLEGATIONS and/or CONCERNS:**

*Please provide all information that you feel is relevant to the complaint. This portion must be either typewritten or clearly printed in ink.*

The xray taken on 7/23/21 was of his entire body and not a 2 sided xray of only his leg. Had they done that, it may have shown how severe his leg was broken. On 7/27/21 when I returned to see Dr. Lanman she recommended bloodwork and I agreed to it. She also wanted to keep the splint on and not consider surgery at this point. His bloodwork showed a higher phosphorus ratio to his calcium level. I was told this was due to his diet. I had purchased Zeus from Pratt's Pet Store on 7/17/21. After I took him home, I began feeding him the Marshall's food which I had been giving my older ferret. I then contacted Pratt's and asked what they gave their ferrets after they received them from the breeder. I was informed that they gave them cat food, Nolo. According to the Vet, that is not an adequate diet for ferrets which caused his phosphorus level to be high compared to the calcium level, making his bones weak. Dr. Lanman recommended a new food, Mazuri.

I decided to take him in for a second opinion and I took him to AZ Exotic Pet Hospital since they specialize in exotic animals. His first visit was on 8/1/21 and there they took proper xrays (2 view of just his leg, not entire body like Pets Vet), as well as bloodwork. His xray showed how severe and broken his leg was. The results of this bloodwork per AZ Exotic Pet Hospital was due to his bone break and because he is still growing.

He went in for surgery on 8/4/21. We were attempting to save his leg but I was contacted when he was in surgery and they didn't have an option to save the leg. He needed to have his leg amputated.

I am appaled that the xray taken at Pets Vet was not correct. AZ Exotic could not see the break on that xray which is why I had to pay for the correct xray with them. Not only was the wrong xray taken of his leg on 7/23 but then on 7/27 when Dr. Lanman saw the xray, she did not recommend the specific one to only view the leg. Their entire prognosis and treatment of Zeus ultimately cost him his leg. This is unfathomable as I had taken him in the day I noticed there appeared to be something wrong with his leg. The purpose was to heal him. Instead he lost the leg due to inadequate care.

They told my mother over the phone that if this case was outside their capability, they would refer him out, which they did not do. We took it upon ourselves to call around for an exotic vet initially inquiring about pet food for him. This was clearly out of their scope and they should have referred him out AFTER doing the proper xrays.

My mother also called them and spoke to Dr. Lanman on 8/2. Dr. Lanman told my mother she did not feel they did anything wrong. She also stated "in retrospect we should have done a different xray" and "most people don't want to pay a few thousand dollars for their pets".

22-08

Zeus presented on 7/23/21 with a primary complaint of rear leg lameness. It was evident that he was unable to properly place the right rear leg. It was not severely painful. I was able to palpate a fracture. I had the technicians take a VD extremity radiograph in which the fracture was found to be located at the right distal femur. We made a small Thomas splint for the patient and securely placed it on him. I showed the owner the radiograph and splint. Metacam was dispensed for daily use at 0.23mg by mouth daily. The owner was instructed to provide rest and confinement for Zeus. The owner was asked to return in 3 days to recheck with Dr. Lorna Lanman for follow-up to recheck the splint, consult about possible dietary issues, and other potential issues. The owner understood the instructions provided, and I heard nothing from the owner since this visit.

Christopher Dorto, DVM

**DOUGLAS A. DUCEY**  
- GOVERNOR -



**VICTORIA WHITMORE**  
- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -

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1740 W. ADAMS STREET, STE. 4600, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007  
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**INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT**

**TO:** Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board

**FROM:** AM Investigative Committee: Robert Kritsberg, DVM - Chair  
Christina Tran, DVM  
Carolyn Ratajack  
Jarrod Butler, DVM  
Steven Seiler

**STAFF PRESENT:** Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT  
Marc Harris, Assistant Attorney General

**RE:** Case: 22-08  
Complainant(s): Hunter McGee  
Respondent(s): Christopher Dorto, D.V.M. (License: 6311)

**SUMMARY:**

Complaint Received at Board Office: 8/5/21  
Committee Discussion: 1/11/22  
Board IIR: 2/16/22

**APPLICABLE STATUTES AND RULES:**

Laws as Amended August 2018  
(Lime Green); Rules as Revised September  
2013 (Yellow).

On July 23, 2021, "Zeus," a 13-week-old male ferret was presented to Dr. Dorto with rear leg lameness. Radiographs revealed a fracture of the right rear leg; a splint was placed, confinement was recommended, and medications were dispensed.

On July 27, 2021, the ferret was presented to Dr. Lanman for a recheck. The splint was dry and positioned appropriately. After reviewing the radiographs, Dr. Lanman suggested blood work due to concerns of metabolic bone disease. Due to the phosphorus and calcium levels, Dr. Lanman recommended changing the ferret's diet and not performing surgery until the metabolic bone disease was reversed.

On August 1, 2021, the ferret was presented to Arizona Exotic Animal Hospital for a second opinion. Radiographs were repeated and surgery was recommended. There were no concerns with the ferret's diet or metabolic bone disease.

On August 4, 2021, surgery was performed to attempt to pin the fracture. Due to concerns of post-op complications with pinning the fracture, amputation was recommended. Complainant agreed and the ferret's right rear leg was amputated.

**Complainant was noticed and appeared telephonically.**

**Respondent was noticed and appeared telephonically. Attorney David Stoll appeared.**

**The Committee reviewed medical records, testimony, and other documentation as described below:**

- Complainant(s) narrative: *Hunter McGee*
- Respondent(s) narrative/medical record: *Christopher Dorto, DVM*

### **PROPOSED 'FINDINGS of FACT':**

1. On July 23, 2021, the ferret was presented to Dr. Dorto for evaluation of right rear leg lameness – not using back legs. Complainant also reported that the ferret had diarrhea. Upon exam, the ferret had a weight = 1.8 pounds (0.8kg), a temperature = 102.5 degrees, a heart rate = 200bpm, and a respiration rate = 40rpm. Dr. Dorto noted laxity in the distal right femur and recommended radiographs to confirm a fracture. A VD radiographs was taken which revealed the fracture in the right distal femur. The leg was splinted; Dr. Dorto recommended strict confinement and rechecking in 3 days with Dr. Lanman for splint evaluation and possible dietary issues. The ferret was discharged with metacam 1.5mg/mL, 8mLs; give 0.15mL orally every 24 hours.

2. On July 27, 2021, the ferret was presented to Dr. Lanman for a recheck. Technical staff noted that the bandage was clean and dry. There was a small amount of feces on the distal end of the splint which was cleaned off the splint and another piece of bandage material was applied. Upon exam, the ferret had a weight = 0.76kg (with splint), a temperature = 103.9 degrees, a heart rate = <200, and a respiration rate = 36bpm. The pet owner reported that the ferret had normal stool and urination, good appetite, and was taking the previously prescribed metacam.

3. Dr. Lanman reviewed the radiograph; she noted that the femur was in alignment, but the bone density indicated a metabolic bone disease being present. She suggested that blood work be performed to evaluate the calcium and phosphorous levels – Complainant agreed. Blood work abnormalities were:

ALB	2.5	2.6 – 3.8
ALKP	106	9 – 84
CREA	0.2	0.4 – 0.9
GLOB	4.1	1.8 – 3.1
PHOS	9.4	4.8 – 8.9

*\*Calcium 8.8      8.0 – 11.8 (blood work shows normal. Dr. Lanman states the calcium/phosphorus ratio is abnormal - concerning)*

4. Dr. Lanman reviewed the blood work with the pet owner and explained that the calcium/phosphorus ratio is not normal – normal value would be Ca:P = 2.5:1. Based on these results, surgery would not be advisable at this time due to the ferret's metabolic bone disease. She further advised Complainant that the ferret was at risk of having all four (4) limbs fracture if he was not confined and the metabolic bone disease was not reversed. Dr. Lanman suggested changing the ferret's diet or contacting the current food manufacturer to find out what the

calcium/phosphorus levels were. A calcium supplement was also recommended. The ferret was discharged with the recommendation to return in one week to recheck the splint and radiograph to see if the bone density had improved.

5. On August 1, 2021, Complainant's mother, Yvette Harrington, presented the ferret to Arizona Exotic Animal Hospital for a second opinion. Ms. Harrington explained that the ferret was moving around more in the 3-tiered enclosure since his last veterinary visit at PetsVet. She was very concerned about the ferret's diet and if the fracture was from having an improper diet, specifically calcium. Dr. Hausmann advised Ms. Harrington that she had not had experience with ferrets having pathological fractures from improper diet and would need to look up some literature on the subject. She explained that it was common for young ferrets to obtain fractures secondary to trauma from falling or rough play. If the fracture was secondary from a metabolic process, other limbs would likely be affected as well.

6. Dr. Hausmann recommended repeating the radiographs and changing the bandage; Ms. Harrington approved. Dr. Hausmann reviewed the blood work performed by Dr. Lanman – the phosphorus and ALP were mildly elevated which would be typically normal for a young growing animal and the calcium was normal. She did not find a definitive answer on metabolic bone disease prevalence in ferrets but would continue to research. Dr. Hausmann commented that it would not be a bad idea to recheck the ferret's blood work also. She did not recommend starting the ferret on a calcium supplement and recommended continuing to feed the Marshall's diet or transitioning to Mazuri ferret diet – both diets have the appropriate calcium phosphorus ratio.

7. Radiographs revealed that the fracture was not in alignment, the bone density was appropriate, and all other structures appeared normal. There was evidence of the bone trying to heal. Dr. Hausmann recommended surgery to fix the limb – continued splinting was not recommended. The ferret would need strict rest after surgery in a one level enclosure with no furniture to jump on for 4 – 6 weeks. They discussed pain medication and mild sedation to keep the ferret calm during recovery.

8. Dr. Hausmann also discussed leg amputation as another option. There was a chance that the fracture fix could fail and the limb would require amputation anyway. An estimate was provided and the ferret was discharged with meloxicam and tramadol until surgery could be performed. Blood was also collected for testing in preparation for the surgery.

9. On August 3, 2021, Dr. Hausmann spoke with Dr. Lanman about the case. Dr. Hausmann felt the splint had failed due to the ferret not being fully cage rested. They discussed metabolic bone disease in ferrets – Dr. Hausmann stated that she had not found a prevalence study on the subject, but brief literature mentioned that it was possible. Dr. Lanman was advised that surgery was scheduled for the following day.

10. On August 4, 2021, the ferret was presented to Dr. Hausmann's associate, Dr. Lamb, for surgery. She evaluated the ferret and discussed surgery options with Complainant. Dr. Lamb would attempt to place an intramedullary pin. If this was not possible due to the fracture being

very distal, she could try a cross pinning technique. Amputation of the leg was also discussed if the one of the pinning approaches would likely be a poor outcome.

11. During the surgery, Dr. Lamb was concerned that the IM pin would not seat well and the ferret would have post-surgical complications. She contacted Complainant to express her concerns and recommend amputating the ferret's leg. Complainant approved and the leg was amputated. Later that day, the ferret was discharged with meloxicam, famotidine and tramadol. Rest for 10 – 14 days was recommended as well as rechecking at that time to ensure proper healing.

12. On August 19, 2021, the ferret was presented to Dr. Attarian at Arizona Exotic Animal Hospital for a recheck. The surgical site had some mild soft tissue swelling – the incision site was healed with some scabs still remaining. The area was cleaned, the ferret was ambulating well on three legs, and could resume normal activity. The ferret was vaccinated and discharged.

### **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:**

The Committee discussed that it would have been ideal to obtain two views of the ferret's limb, however Respondent was able to see the fracture and its location. If a second view was obtained, it could have shown that there would be no chance of healing with only a splint applied. The actual position of the fracture would have been seen on a second view and the treatment recommendation would have been likely different. Additionally, the radiograph was poor quality.

The Committee discussed that there did not appear to have been metabolic disease, based on the radiographs; metabolic disease is not common in ferrets. The exotic veterinarian did not feel there was a metabolic issue.

There were conflicting stories with respect to the ferret's confinement and restriction of activity. However, splinting was not the appropriate treatment regardless of confinement issues. If an additional view was taken and the break was in close proximity – lack of confinement could have resulted in what was seen in the exotic veterinarian's radiograph.

Respondent did not have a lot experience with ferrets and did not refer to a specialists. However, he did refer to his associate who had experience with ferrets.

### **COMMITTEE'S PROPOSED CONCLUSIONS of LAW:**

The Committee concluded that violations of the Veterinary Practice Act occurred.

### **COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION:**

**Motion:** It was moved and seconded the Board find:



**ARS § 32-2232 (12)** as it relates to **AAC R3-11-501 (1)** failure to provide professionally acceptable procedures for not performing a second view of the ferret's fractured limb to provide a proper diagnosis and treatment plan and relying on a poor-quality radiograph to provide an accurate diagnosis.

**Vote:** The motion was approved with a vote of 5 to 0.

The information contained in this report was obtained from the case file, which includes the complaint, the respondent's response, any consulting veterinarian or witness input, and any other sources used to gather information for the investigation.

TR

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Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT  
Investigative Division

DOUGLAS A. DUCEY  
GOVERNOR



VICTORIA WHITMORE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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IN ACCORDANCE WITH A.R.S. § 32-2237(D): "IF THE BOARD REJECTS ANY RECOMMENDATION CONTAINED IN A REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE, IT SHALL DOCUMENT THE REASONS FOR ITS DECISION IN WRITING."

At the February 16, 2022 meeting of the Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board, the Board considered the recommendations of the Investigative Committee regarding case number 22-08 In Re: Christopher Dorto, DVM.

The Board considered the Investigative Committee's Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law:

**ARS § 32-2232 (12)** as it relates to **AAC R3-11-501 (1)** failure to provide professionally acceptable procedures for not performing a second view of the ferret's fractured limb to provide a proper diagnosis and treatment plan and relying on a poor-quality radiograph to provide an accurate diagnosis.

Following discussion, the Board concluded that Respondent's conduct did not rise to the level of a violation and voted to dismiss this issue with no violation and issue a **Letter of Concern** with respect to failing to take two radiographic views of the ferret's limb and failing to document in the medical record the reason why two views were not taken.

Respectfully submitted this 16<sup>TH</sup> day of March, 2022.

Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Loughhead", written over a horizontal line.

Jim Loughhead, Chair